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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 001058

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/31/2017  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [VE](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: DRUG SUMMIT AND GO-IT-ALONE DRUG RHETORIC

REF: A. CARACAS 945  
[1](#)B. CARACAS 999

Classified By: Political Counselor Francisco Fernandez  
for Reason 1.4(b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Minister of Interior and Justice Ramon Rodriguez Chacin will represent the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (BRV) at an August 1 regional drug summit in Cartagena hosted by Colombian President Alvaro Uribe. According to sources at the Colombian Embassy, the BRV ignored the invitation until its last minute public announcement that Rodriguez Chacin would attend. Since Chavez' July 5 overture to the USG, Rodriguez Chacin and Foreign Minister Nicholas Maduro have repeatedly asserted to the media that drug seizures have improved since severing ties with the DEA. Nestor Reverol, head of the National Anti-Drug Office (ONA) told local press that he was awaiting instructions from Chavez on how to cooperate with the U.S. Chavez seems to be trying to polish Venezuela's international image as Chacin and Maduro play to his nationalist base. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) Minister of Interior and Justice Ramon Rodriguez Chacin will join Colombian President Alvaro Uribe and five other heads of state and seventeen delegations from Central America and the Caribbean at the regional summit concerning the "World Drug Problem" in Cartagena, Colombia. According to Juan Colorado, the Colombian Embassy Press Officer, (Protect) the BRV ignored President Uribe's invitation for fifteen days and only announced Rodriguez Chacin's last minute attendance via a press release after Colombia threatened to publicize the snub.

[1](#)3. (U) Since Chavez' July 5 gesture (Ref. A) to resume anti-drug cooperation, ministers Chacin Rodriguez and Maduro have regularly impugned the effectiveness of the DEA. Responding on July 17 to A/S Shannon's congressional testimony, Foreign Minister Maduro claimed that Venezuelan drug seizures had tripled (Ref. B) since Venezuelan stopped working with the DEA. During a July 21 press conference Rodriguez Chacin claimed that drug seizures had steadily increased since the DEA left Venezuela and accused the USG of spreading misinformation to "discredit our government and justify the FOURTH FLEET." Chacin argued that as the largest consumer of drugs, the United States has the lowest drug seizure rate. In his July 27 "Alo Presidente" program, Chavez echoed these arguments and underscored that even though drug trafficking was a problem between the main source country, Colombia, and the main consumer, the United States, Venezuelan anti-narcotics efforts had, and would increase, but he made no comment about increased cooperation with the United States.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: Chavez is dedicating considerable time and

energy in an apparent effort to bolster his international image. Chavez' July 5 conversation with the Ambassador and his burying the hatchet with King Juan Carlos on a recent trip to Spain are part of a concerted effort to soften his rough edges in an election year. Meanwhile Maduro and Rodriguez Chacin continue to tend to Chavez' nationalist base by attacking the United States. It will be interesting to see whether Rodriguez Chacin uses the Cartagena summit to advance regional cooperation or just continues to attack the "Empire". End Comment.

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